Miss M. Annie Dodd.

The Bloomfield Record.

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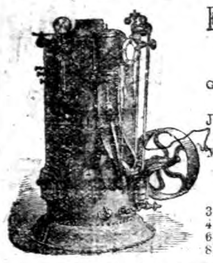

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LITERATURE OF THE DAY.

THE ROMAN VESTALS.

The worship of Vesta, the goddess of purity, dates as far back as the time of Numa, who consecrated a temple to Vesta, and appointed four priestesses to watch the sacred fire which perpetually burned at the altar, and to officiate in the services of the temple. Six more were afterward appointed, but the number ten was never exceeded. They were chosen by the high priests from noble Roman families, who esteemed it an honor to enroll a daughter's name among the Vestals. Dedicated at the early age of ten, they were bound to a service of thirty years, after which they were permitted to return to the world, and even to marry. They were held in great deference by the Roman people, places of honor near the patricians and senators were appointed for them in the amphitheatres, and the signal for the commencement of the games was given by a Vestal Virgin. When they passed along the streets, in their chariots of ivory and gold, lictors preceded them, crying aloud, "Make way for the Vestals." Every one stopped, and all heads were bowed in silence; and it was profanation to look on them. If convicted of a breach of her vow of chastity, or of having allowed the sacred fire to expire on the altar, the Vestal was condemned to be buried alive. On those occasions, as the melancholy train passed from the temple to the field (still called the Campo Scelerato) beyond the walls, where the sepulchre was prepared, not a creature was seen in the streets; every house was closed, as in a time of general mourning. The Flamens preceded the unhappy victim, who, stripped of her rich ornaments, and wrapped in grave clothes, was consigned, after many rites and prayers, to her living tomb—a vault of small dimensions, in which was placed a couch, and on a table a small provision of bread and water, a lamp, and some oil. The entrance was then built, and the Vestal left to her lonely and dreadful death.

TESTING HIS SONS FOR A RULER.

Feeling extremely ill one day, William Thompson, the renowned Maori chieftain, being at the time advanced in years, deemed it incumbent upon him to settle the succession to his supreme authority over the Maori Nation. He had two grown-up sons—fine spirited fellows—and, with the shrewdness that characterized him throughout life, he hit upon the following test of their respective capabilities for rule, resolving that his choice between the two should be determined by the result of his quaint experiment: As he was lying on a couch by the open door of his house, he summoned them to his bedside, and, addressing the elder of the two, exclaimed: "Shortland, take down my gun and shoot that white man standing by the hut over there." The heir-apparent was in the act of obeying his father's orders, when Thompson's second son stepped forward, caught his brother's arm and remonstrated with him, saying, "Why should you kill the man? What harm has he done to you, or, for that matter, to any of us?" "Thou hast said well, my son," ejaculated the dying chief. "In thee I discern the true qualities requisite in rulers of men—intelligence, prudence and the love of justice. When I am dead thou shalt govern in my stead." And so it came to pass; for a few hours later, Thompson formally presented his second son to the elders of his nation as their future chief, and upon his death, which occurred shortly afterward, no attempt was made to dispute his choice of a successor.—*London Telegraph.*

ENDURANCE ON HORSEBACK.

A remarkable feat of horsemanship and equestrian endurance has been accomplished by M. Prieur de la Comble, Sub-Lieutenant in the Seventh French Dragoons. The officer undertook to ride his chestnut mare, Mascotte, from Luneville to Paris, a distance of two hundred and seventeen and one-half miles in seventy-two hours. M. Prieur de la Comble mounted his mare, and duly arrived at the horse show in the Champs Elysees with half an hour to spare. On reaching Paris, Mascotte, frightened by a tramway horn, had an ugly fall, but neither she nor her rider took any harm, and except that they were covered with dust, both looked as fresh as at the start. A perfect ovation awaited the gallant officer and his now celebrated steed, and a special prize was forthwith awarded for the manner in which the feat was accomplished.

HOW THE THISTLE BECAME AN EMBLEM.

It was at the time of an invasion when the destinies of Scotland hung upon the result of a battle soon to come. The invaders were upon the soil, and if they gained the victory in the first encounter, they might not afterward be overcome. It matters not whether the invaders were Danes, or Norwegians, or Normans, the simple origin of the emblem is the same. The invaders knew that the Scots were desperate, and if they would surely conquer them, they must fall upon them suddenly and unawares. To this end they availed themselves of a dark, stormy night, and planned to fall upon the Scottish army on every side at the same moment. Had they been suffered to execute their plan undetected, they would certainly have succeeded in entirely destroying the Scots, but a simple accident betrayed them. When near the Scottish camp the foremost of the invaders removed the heavy shoes from their feet so that their steps might not be heard, and thus stealthily advancing, barefooted, a heavy, quick-tempered soldier trod squarely upon a huge thistle, the sharp point of which gave such sudden and exquisite pain, that he cried out with a bitter curse in his agony. His cry aroused the outlying Scots, and apprised them of their danger. With wonderful alacrity, they sprang to their arms, and meeting the foe widely divided for the purpose of encompassing the camp, they were enabled to easily overcome them, which they did with great slaughter. The unfortunate soldier who had so unwittingly given the alarm was captured alive; and when he had told his story, and the Scots knew to what their deliverance was due, they resolved to adopt the thistle as the national insignia of their country.

THE SALAMANDER.

We have always considered the popular mythical legend or delusion, in regard to the salamander's being able to go through fire unscathed, as one of the most preposterous of mythical delusions. A Western gentleman, however, whom we know to be reliable, recently related to us a story in relation to the lizards of Nevada, which would seem to confirm the possibility of their enduring intense heat for a short time at least. The black lizards of the sage-brush State are very easily domesticated, harmless, social and intelligent. This gentleman had several pet lizards, one of which lived near a furnace where he burned retorts or moulds for silver bullion. The work required a very hot fire, which he made open at each end. The lizard would sit on the iron near by, watching him. His dog would frequently chase the lizard if it ventured to the ground, and compel it to take to the iron again. Frequently, however, the lizard, apparently for the sport of the thing, would dash down off the iron and induce the dog to give it a sharp race, when it would run right *through the furnace*, coming out of the other end like a flash, unscathed, while the dog in his eagerness would be burned at the fire before he could stop. This would be a daily occurrence, and the lizard actually seemed to enjoy the joke on the dog. The time that the lizard, or salamander, was in the fire was very short, and it doubtless could not have remained there a very great length of time; but the fact of its not fearing the fire is sufficient to have given rise to the idea of the fire-proof salamander.—*Philadelphia Saturday Night.*

A NORTHERN MAN'S FOLLY.

The Montezuma (Georgia) *Weekly* says there stands in that county a three-story building which tells of a Northern man's folly, and is all that remains of his once large fortune. Directly after the war, he went to that country, purchased a large plantation, erected this mammoth building and filled it with an immense stock of goods, such as has not been seen in that section since, and was never seen before. His stock consisted of the finest silks, satins, laces, broadcloths and everything in the dry goods line on the second floor. His grocery department on the second floor contained everything that man could want. The third floor was filled to the utmost with the most costly furniture and finest metallic burial cases. It is said that people would flock to his store by the hundreds, but only to look, as very little of his immense stock was ever sold. The people were crude and had no use for such finery. After a few months of business the man was forced to suspend and went back to the North.

SWINDLING AN UNDERTAKER.

A New York undertaker, who had been employed by a wealthy family to bury their only daughter, was recently swindled in a novel manner. He was called upon a few days after the interment by a well-dressed young man, who professed to have been betrothed to the young lady, and, desiring to give some token of the extent of his affections for her, was anxious to pay the funeral expenses. After much persuasion, the undertaker was induced to make out his bill, and the young man, saying that he would return in a few moments with a cheque. No cheque was received, and the undertaker some time afterward ascertained that the swindler had called on the father of the deceased and collected the amount.

HE'D PAID HIS FARE.

When Sir Charles Lyell, the eminent geologist, was in America, he seems to have had some curious advice given to him about traveling on the Mississippi steamboats. "Never pay your fare until you are compelled to," was the first piece of wisdom thrown at him. "And, pray, why not?" he asked. "Because your chances are better in case of trouble." "Will you kindly explain yourself, sir?" said Lyell. "Well," answered the American, "when I was traveling up the river last March, somebody cried out, 'Passenger overboard!' The Captain hurried to the office and asked, 'Has the man overboard paid his fare?' On being answered in the affirmative, he turned to the pilot and said, indifferently, "Go ahead; it's all right.'"

As an element of society, a pure, good woman invites into the finest demonstrations all that is good in the heart; and she dismays into secrecy and silence all that is unbecoming and despicable.—*Dr. J. G. Holland.*

The best books are those that each reader thinks he could have written. Nature, which alone is good, is always familiar and common.

In the man whose childhood has known caresses there is always a fiber of memory that can be touched to gentle issues.—*George Eliot.*

Pleasure is a weak tie of friendship; those who toil together are stronger friends than those who play.